

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS YAROSLAVSKY AND KNABE

March 24, 2009

The 2007 Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority Homeless Count reports 73,000 homeless persons in the County of Los Angeles, 40% of whom are women and children. Of the four major race/ethnic groups, African Americans make up over 50% of the homeless population; 24% are Latino, 19% White, 4% Multi-race, 2% American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 1% Asian Pacific Islanders.

The homeless population in Los Angeles County is particularly vulnerable to crime and violence. Recently, homeless individuals have been the targets of vicious crimes. On March 9th, 2009, a 66 year old homeless man was stabbed several times on the sidewalk on Avenue 19 in Lincoln Heights and died at the scene. On October 9th, 2008, John Robert McGraham, a homeless man, was doused and torched to death by three unidentified youth in a Mid-Wilshire neighborhood of Los Angeles. On November 3rd, three men and two women were found murdered at a homeless encampment in Long Beach. Prior to that, the June 2008 prosecution of the "black widow murderers," who preyed upon homeless men, gives further clear evidence of an emerging pattern of homeless individuals being an easy target of violence in our communities.

It is apparent that some criminal acts against the homeless are motivated by not only their vulnerability, but also the perpetrators' disdain and disrespect for them because they are homeless persons. To stop this pattern from continuing, we must increase public awareness and promote a better understanding of the plight of homelessness through community outreach and education. In addition, we must have more succinct law enforcement tracking and analysis of crimes against the homeless, in order to strengthen prevention and prosecution efforts under existing laws.

MOTION

MOLINA _____

RIDLEY-THOMAS _____

YAROSLAVSKY _____

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WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board request the Human Relations Commission (Commission) to:

- 1) Integrate the issues of prejudice and violence against the homeless into its *zerohour* human relations model high school initiative and its other youth projects to promote a greater understanding of how people become homeless, and to humanize the challenges of homelessness to counter the lack of respect and compassion;
- 2) Include in all Commission hate crime trainings conducted for law enforcement professionals an emphasis on investigating whether a crime against a homeless person is motivated by discriminatory attitudes or bias against a disability, including mental or physical disabilities, and to track such crimes;
- 3) Create a new category in the Commission's hate crime database for those targeting the homeless, and include such occurrences in the Commission's annual hate crime report, in order to identify patterns in location, times, type of crime, and motivation, and notify law enforcement and community members of such trends;
- 4) Request the Sheriff and District Attorney, as well as city prosecutors Countywide to track and report all crimes against the homeless, so as to be able to determine whether anti-homeless crime and violence is becoming more or less frequent, what types of crimes they are, and where they are taking place in order to assist efforts to develop strategies and actions to prevent and reduce such crime;
- 5) Coordinate and communicate with Human Relations Commissions countywide to maximize any opportunities for collaboration;
- 6) Report back in 60 days.